

WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMES

Matthew 25:1-46

Key Verses: 25:31,32

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats."

Chapter 25 consists of three very beautiful parables: the ten virgins (1-13), the talents (14-30), and the sheep and the goats (31-46). These parables tell us that we must have a basic attitude as Jesus' people when we expect to enter the kingdom of God. We also must live a faithful life as we wait for the Second Coming of Jesus. In this chapter we especially learn what Jesus will do when he comes again.

First, the five foolish virgins (1-13). As we have studied, the kingdom of God is the central theme of Matthew's Gospel, and it is repeated here again. Look at verse 1. "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom." This verse implies that those who hope to enter the kingdom of God should be like pure virgin brides who are waiting for the coming of the bridegroom. According to Jewish custom, the bridegroom would come to the bride to have a wedding ceremony after a one-year period of engagement. The bridegroom would be accompanied by many friends and relatives when he comes to get married.

The bride also would invite many of her friends to be her bridesmaids. The bride would put on makeup and dress up like a princess, and the others would be her attendants. As a custom, the bride and her attendants would come out on the road and play musical instruments or dance merrily until the bridegroom and his company would arrive. In ancient times, transportation was not so convenient; so the bridegroom's coming would frequently be delayed. The bride and her bridesmaids had to wait until the bridegroom and his company arrived.

Look at verse 2. "Five of them were foolish and five were wise." The foolish virgins took their lamps but did not take any oil with them (3). The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep (5). Look at verse 6. "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'" Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out." "No," they replied, "there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves" (7-9). The foolish virgins should have gone to the [gas station](#) and bought oil beforehand. But they did not because they were lazy. While the foolish virgins were on their way to the gas station, the bridegroom arrived, and the virgins who were ready went in with him to [the wedding banquet](#). And the door was shut. Later, the foolish virgins came back from the gas station and knocked at the gate, saying, "Sir! Sir! Open the door for us!" He replied, "I tell you the truth, I don't know you" (10-12). Usually, a virgin bride has an inherent joy to prepare many things--everything--for the day of her wedding. All virgin brides are

joyful and very diligent to prepare for their happy weddings. None of them are lazy. It is unbelievable that the five of them were so lazy that they did not prepare oil beforehand. We cannot deny that the foolish virgins' problem was that they were lazy. These lazy women thought they were the smartest. But they were foolish women. These foolish women could not get into the wedding banquet. There was a girl student who wanted to get a Ph.D. and become a scientist like Newton. Her idealism was good. But she was overcome by laziness. When she was overcome by laziness, she was overwhelmed by lustful desires. From then on, she lived a loose life. Later, she became a factory girl instead of a scientist. Smart people calculate again and again; finally they come to the conclusion, "Well, I am going to invest the least and get the most benefit." There is a danger for smart people to become lazy. The foolish virgins represent lazy people. Laziness is not a light matter. The five foolish virgins were lazy, and their laziness disqualified them from the happy wedding banquet. Verse 13 says, "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."

Second, the five wise virgins (4,10). Look at verse 4. "The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps." They were diligent. When they were tired and sleepy, they overcame themselves and went to the gas station to get some extra oil. To be diligent seems to be easy. But it is not. It requires a diligent mind. Here, preparing oil is to prepare to wait for the bridegroom's coming. This is comparable to our lives of faith. The life of faith requires faithfulness. Faithful people lose a lot to remain faithful. To worldly people, such people look weird. But to God they are faithful people. God is happy to give his kingdom to those faithful people. There are certain things we can borrow from others. We can borrow others' bicycles or pencils. But there are certain things we cannot borrow, such as another person's noble character or faithfulness. Therefore we must ask God, so that he may help us to be faithful.

Third, wise managers (14-22). Jesus again teaches how to be a member of the kingdom of God. Look at verses 14,15. "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey." Here we learn that God has given each of us talents according to our own ability. We also learn that we have to work hard with the talents given us by God. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more (16). Also, the one with two talents gained two more (17). It is not easy to know how to put our money to work. If we knew how to put our money to work, we would all be millionaires. It is not easy to teach someone how to put his money to work. But we can learn from the one who had received five talents how to put our money to work. The man who had received the five talents acknowledged that he had been entrusted with his master's talents. When he had this realization, God made him a man of mission, a man of faithfulness and a man of wisdom, who figured out how to put his money to work until he made 100% profit for his master. It was the same for the one who received the two talents. God helps those who help themselves. What happened to them? They experienced the joy that comes from success and achievement. They experienced the joy that comes from faithfulness. So, with great joy, they exclaimed, "Master, you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five

more" (20). "Master, you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more" (22). This tells us that God gives great joy along with the crown of life to those who are faithful to God.

Fourth, God's reward for his faithful servants (19-23). After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them (19). The one who gained five more said, "Master, you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more" (20). What did the master say? Look at verse 21. "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"

First of all, faithful servants receive God's recognition. To all mankind, the problem of recognition is not a small matter. Many young people want recognition. They want recognition as a bright person or a good athlete. But these kinds of recognition cannot satisfy our souls. When we are recognized as faithful persons by God it is indeed glorious. There is no recognition better than being called a faithful person. When we are recognized by God as faithful people, our souls rejoice. Mary the mother of Jesus praised God when she was recognized by God, saying, "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Lk 1:46b,47). When one is recognized by God, he can recognize himself, and as a result, his soul rejoices.

When we are faithful to God, there is another reward. Look at verse 21b. "I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" When we are faithful to God to the point of death, God does not give us a vacation to Florida. God exalts us with greater tasks and greater responsibilities. In other words, God makes us great. God also makes us happy. Happiness does not come from the things of the world. It comes from God. When God makes us happy we are indeed happy.

Fifth, a foolish manager (24-30). Let's see what happened to the man who had received the one talent. He said, "You are a hard and able man. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you" (24, 25). When the servant who had received the one talent thought about his master, that he was a hard man, he was afraid. He dug a hole in the ground and hid his talent.

What did the master do with him? Look at verse 26. "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed?'" His master rebuked him, saying, "Wicked and lazy servant!" In the Bible we can scarcely find synonyms repeated in order to emphasize something. But Jesus rebukes wicked people, saying, "You wicked, lazy servant!" Here we learn that lazy people are wicked people. Lazy people are selfish people. Lazy people are unfaithful people. Lazy people are arrogant people. Still they say to themselves, "Hmm, I am the smartest guy in the world." But verse 30 says, "And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Finally, lazy people receive great punishment.

Sixth, our King Jesus separates the sheep and the goats (31-33). Look at verses 31,32. "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the

nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." These days most people think of Jesus as a nobody. But he will come again to judge all people and all nations. When Jesus comes to this world again, first he will separate the sheep from the goats. Until now, many brutal people pretended to be God's people, covering themselves with sheepskins. But when Jesus comes again, he will uncover them and separate the sheep from the goats. Here, "sheep" refers to God's children, and "goats" to hypocrites. Human beings are basically all hypocrites because of their fallen nature. So the King Jesus judges man's motives and purpose of life (Ro 2:6-9). These days most people hate Jesus by hating his people. But when Jesus comes again, they must stand before him to be judged by him. His judgment will be severe indeed. When they are judged, they have to gnash their teeth in the darkness forever (30).

Seventh, our King Jesus gives his kingdom to his people (34-40). Look at verse 34. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'" Verses 35,36 read, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." The King Jesus does not ignore those who helped the helpless while living in this hard world. The King Jesus regards their good works done for the helpless as done for himself personally.

What did they say in response to the king's verdict? Look at verses 37-39. "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'" They were surprised by the king's good verdict for them. They never thought they were helping others. They never thought they were helping Christ and thus piling up eternal reward. They helped the helpless simply because they loved God from their hearts. They simply gave hungry men meals because they loved God. They simply welcomed strangers because they loved God. They simply visited the sick to comfort them because they loved God. Here we learn that when we love God, we can love our neighbor.

When we have God in our hearts, God gives us happiness. What is the secret of happiness? The secret of happiness is to have God in one's heart. There is a story about a centurion (Mt 8:5-13). Roman officers were known to be proud, straightforward and merciless. But this centurion was different. One morning he saw that his young servant was very sick. The servant's eyes looked pointless, and his lips, dried. Then the centurion threw away his briefcase and went to the Jewish rulers. He persuaded them to ask Jesus to come and heal his servant. The centurion could do this because he loved God and he loved his neighbor.

They say that once, St. Francis of Assisi met a leper, loathsome and repulsive in the ugliness of his leprosy. St. Francis dismounted and flung his arms around this wretched man. A few seconds later he

found that the face of the leper in his arms changed to the face of Christ. St. Francis did this because he loved God. Abraham rescued Lot at the expense of his wealth when Lot became a war prisoner, even though Lot had betrayed his love and care (Ge 14). To human eyes, Abraham was foolish. However, he could not stop himself, but rescued Lot at any cost. How could Abraham do this? It was because he loved God.

On the other hand, King Jesus punishes selfish people (41-46). What is the verdict for those whose inner motive is selfish? Look at verse 41. "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" They will be cast into eternal punishment because they lived a selfish life. They never gave food to the hungry (42). They never gave water to the thirsty. They never welcomed strangers into their apartments (43). Instead, they used all their money to please their stomachs. Selfish people usually want to get something from others. They have no idea to give something to others. Selfish people become arrogant after getting all the benefits from God. These days secular humanists propagate the idea of living a selfish life. They lead others to eternal destruction.

In this chapter we learn that we must live a life of faith while we are waiting for the [Second Coming](#) of Jesus. We must be like the five wise virgins. We must learn how to put money to work for the glory of God. We must believe that we inherit the kingdom of God when we believe in Jesus.